

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-15. (Canceled)

16. (Original) A fixation device, comprising:

a support member, wherein the support member includes at least one slot extending through the side of the support member;

first and second support shafts extending through the slot of the support member, the slot and the support shafts being configured and dimensioned to allow movement of the support shafts in a longitudinal direction with respect to the support member; and

a coupling assembly positioned along the support member, wherein the coupling assembly is configured and arranged to 1) releasably couple the support shafts to the support member at a selectable separation distance; 2) apply a force against the support shafts; and 3) permit controlled movement of the first support shaft with respect to the second support shaft.

17. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the force applied against the support shafts is variable.

18. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the longitudinal axis of each support shaft is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the support member.

19. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the coupling assembly includes springs to apply force against the support shafts.

20. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 16, wherein the coupling assembly includes at least one selectively positionable coupler, the position of the coupler partially determining the magnitude of the applied force against the support shafts.

21. (Original) The fixation device of Claim 20, wherein the coupler is a threaded fastener or clamp.

22-27. (Canceled)

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